

**Planning for the Test Preparation Unit**

*Grades 4-5*

The PARCC PBA (Performance-Based Assessment) will include three different tasks: Literary Analysis, Research Simulation and Narrative. The best preparation for these tasks are our Units of Study and the suggested Unit Assessments. Within these units are teaching points that align directly to the Common Core State Standards and ultimately with PARCC. The accompanying unit assessments were also created to align with the language and demands of PARCC.

With that said, we recommend that you plan for a unit that helps students transfer skills and knowledge to the specific genre of test-taking. Planning for this unit will depend on the needs of your students and an assessment of areas in which you’ve already focused and those that need more attention. Below are our suggestions to help you in planning:

**Suggestions Across the Unit:**

* Maintain students’ stamina for reading and thinking by providing longer periods of time for reading and responding. The “test prep” activities should not replace independent reading and writing, but rather be integrated into minilessons and independent reading and writing. If you are finding your workshop times to be shortened or broken up by test prep activities, consider the once-a-week “reading marathon” day suggested in Calkins’ Test Preparation Unit of Study.
* Co-create a genre chart with your students (See *Blank Genre Chart Template*). The more your students “get their minds ready” for reading in a particular genre, and planning for writing depending on the text type, the more strategic they will be as test takers.
	+ Provide brief immersion into genres not yet explored yet in your grade (e.g. poetry, scripts, biography).
* Give students the opportunity to read and write online (See *Using Digital Resources for Test Prep*).
* Provide opportunities for children to write in response to texts (see *Preparing for Constructed Response*).
* Engage children in Close Reading. Through Close Reading experiences you can model and scaffold how to deepen comprehension and support ideas with evidence. Also use Close Reading to help students consider the author’s craft (such as word choice, use of visual images).
* Give children practice with PARCC itself. Use the practice as an opportunity to teach and work through questions together, in addition to giving students independent practice. [PARCC Practice Tests](http://parcc.pearson.com/practice-tests/english/)
* Familiarize yourself with the language of the test and make sure your students are familiar too. [See *Language from PARCC Practice Test-Multiple Choice*]

**Preparing specifically for responding to nonfiction texts (Research Simulation Task):**

* Provide students with practice in determining the main idea and identifying supporting evidence. The nonfiction units of study help students determine main idea and supporting details through “boxes and bullets”. Return to both expository nonfiction and narrative nonfiction while modeling and scaffolding the thinking required of boxes and bullets.
* Use the short texts found on our website in the nonfiction unit ([Nonfiction Articles](http://ppsgrade3.weebly.com/nonfiction-resources-for-students.html)) and also in *The Comprehension Toolkit* and in *Toolkit Texts* to pair with PARCC-like questions (See *Language from PARCC Practice Test-Multiple Choice*). You may want to focus on one type of question that is unfamiliar or tricky for your students across one week, using several different short texts. You may also find useful short texts from the resources you received a couple of years ago accompanying the Calkins Test Prep Unit of Study.
* See *Preparing for Constructed Responses* for suggestions on teaching students to write in response to informational texts (a key component of the Research Simulation Task).

**Preparing specifically for responding to narrative texts (Literary Analysis and Narrative Tasks)**:

* Provide students with practice in determining and comparing/contrasting themes in narrative texts and supporting these themes with text evidence. *Understanding Character* and the *Interpretation Text Set* units build toward helping students do just this. Return to these units to review specific teaching points that help students look beyond the plot toward theme through read-alouds, short passages, and familiar texts. Remember to include not only traditional narratives, but also poetry.
* If you have not yet conducted the pre- and post-assessments suggested for these units, you can also use these assessments as opportunities for teaching and practice. In particular, we highly encourage you to use the pre- and post-assessments from the Interpretation Text Set unit which have been created in a digital form.
* Help children understand point of view. Return to a scene from familiar read-alouds and ask students to turn-and-talk from different perspectives. For example, “This scene is written from Opal’s perspective. Imagine it was written from the dad’s perspective instead. Describe (and/or write) the scene.”
* Use short narrative texts (or excerpts from past read alouds) to pair with PARCC-like questions (See *Language from PARCC Practice Test-Multiple Choice*). You may want to focus on one type of question that is unfamiliar or tricky for your students across one week, using several different short texts. You may find useful short texts from the resources you received a couple of years ago accompanying the Calkins Test Prep Unit of Study.
* See *Preparing for Constructed Responses* for suggestions on teaching students to write in response to narrative texts (key components of the Literary Analysis and Narrative Tasks).